

# 1,000 more to leave Willowbrook

By DAVID KUSNET

Willowbrook State School should have 1,000 fewer residents by next April, the state Mental Health Department announced yesterday.

The statement was the long-awaited response to a federal court order issued April 10 requiring emergency measures to improve conditions at Willowbrook.

While discussing overcrowding, the statement didn't announce new programs for the problems of patient abuse, unsanitary conditions and the shortage of professional personnel cited by Eastern District Court Judge Orrin G. Judd.

In a landmark ruling, Judd held that Willowbrook patients are guaranteed the right to protection from harm by the Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Waiting almost two weeks to reply, the deputy commissioner for mental retardation and children's services, Robert W. Hayes, said he wanted to study the text of the ruling.

Hayes said yesterday the state will "reduce the resident

population by an additional 1,000" by working "in cooperation with local public and voluntary agencies."

The largest school of its kind in the nation, Willowbrook had 5,200 residents in January 1972. Its population April 5 was 4,294 — 94 more than the level the state had planned for this month. Some 100 patients will be removed by the end of the month, Hayes said.

He said the 1,000 patients who will leave Willowbrook this year will be placed in group homes or in "new and expanding community-based state facilities." Others will be discharged and resettled in local communities.

In order to resettle patients this month, the Advance learned yesterday, a state facility in Greenwich Village has been converted to resident services.

## 65 PATIENTS

The Sheridan unit of the Manhattan Developmental Services Program has received 65 Willowbrook patients. Others are being placed either in family care homes or private residential programs in Manhattan.

Apparently taking issue with the court order, Hayes said: "This further reduction will mean that the available staff will then be far more than adequate to meet the needs of the remaining residents."

Judd had ordered the state to bring the ratio of patients to staff to nine to one. He demanded that 400 additional attendants be hired.

With the reduced population and new hiring last year, Hayes, however, said the state only needs to hire 100 more ward service workers. This, he maintained, would "ensure the ordered minimum ward coverage of one staff person for every nine residents during waking hours in all units housing the severely and profoundly retarded and the emotionally disturbed."

Judd's ruling said there was only one attendant for 38 patients at night in Willowbrook. There are more than 100 vacancies.

## LARGER STAFF

He also ordered the hiring of at least 85 more nurses, 30 more physical therapists, 15 more physicians and additional recreation specialists.

Hayes claimed yesterday that all inoperable toilets will be repaired within a day after failures are reported.

His only other response to charges of a health hazard was that the state is negotiating to provide patients with acute hospital care in an accredited institution.

Hayes also said, "It is planned to begin re-equipping and decorating some of the buildings to provide a more humane environment and to expand and improve staff training and food, laundry and maintenance services.

Praising the court order as "a penetrating, balanced and helpful analysis," Hayes maintained the actions aren't responses to the ruling but are part of a state plan.